

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 17, 2009

The Honorable James L. Oberstar, Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John L. Mica, Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Peter A. DeFazio, Chairman
Subcommittee on Highways and Transit
B-370A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John J. Duncan, Jr., Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Highways and Transit
B-375 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Oberstar, Ranking Member Mica, Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Duncan:

As the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee continues its work in drafting the next transportation authorization bill, we urge you to significantly increase funding for safety improvements on high risk rural roads. These funds can help end the current tragic loss of life that is occurring annually on rural roads.

Although rural roads bear 40 percent of all travel, the U.S. Department of Transportation reports that 56.7% of annual deaths occur on rural roads. Out of the 38,000 roadway deaths that occurred in 2008, approximately 22,000 deaths occurred on rural roadways. The High Risk Rural Roads program was created in SAFETEA-LU as a set-aside in the Highway Safety Improvement Program. It provides critical federal assistance for safety improvements on rural two-lane roads that are not otherwise eligible for state or federal funding. However, we can and must do more to protect our constituents, starting with improving safety on our rural roads. Republicans, Democrats, and Independents can all agree that America should strive for zero deaths on its roadways.

With the transportation authorization bill upon us, the time is now to have a deep and wide-ranging conversation about how to best serve the transportation needs of all Americans. This conversation must begin by seeking ways to reduce fatalities on our nation's rural roads. With more flexibility to use low-cost solutions, state and local entities can make their communities' roads safe, efficient, and reliable. However, the states and locals cannot do it alone -- rural road safety must be a national priority.

The current authorization bill provides a critical opportunity to strengthen the Federal commitment to improving safety on rural roads, both through increased safety funding and modifications to address issues that have been identified with the current High Risk Rural Roads program. Guidelines should be established to direct these funds to the most dangerous rural roads, irrespective of whether the roadway is owned by a state or a local entity. Lack of such guidelines under the current program has led funds to be allocated in a way which does not achieve the most beneficial performance-based results.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this most important matter. We trust that you will carefully consider how the current High Risk Rural Roads program can be improved so as to significantly increase funding for our nation's deadliest roads. The lives of so many rural Americans depend on it.


Sincerely,


Congressman Michael A. Arcuri

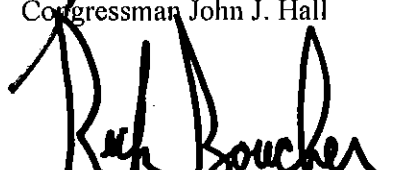

Congressman Bob Filner

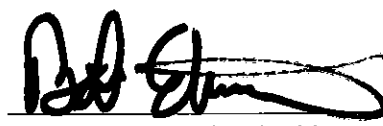

Congressman Michael H. Michaud


Congressman Christopher P. Carney

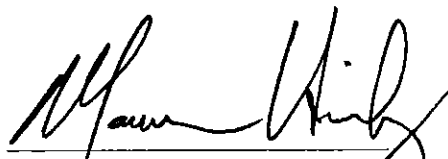

Congressman John J. Hall


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Congressman Rick Boucher


Congressman Bob Etheridge


Congressman Bill Foster



Congressman Maurice D. Hinchey

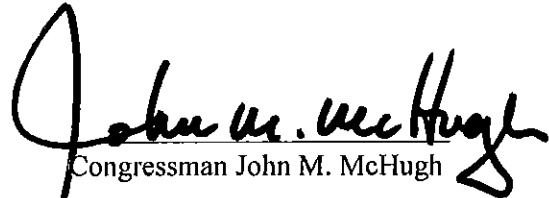

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Congressman Charles A. Wilson


Congressman Harold Rogers


Congressman Paul Tonko